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October 29, 2008

City of Novi  
Zoning Board of Appeals  
45175 West 10 Mile Road  
Novi, MI 48375

**RE: PETITION REQUEST FOR VARIANCES –  
PROPOSED SRI VENKATESWARA TEMPLE AND CULTURAL CENTER,  
Zoning Board of Appeals Case No. SP#08-054**

We hereby respectfully request to the City of Novi Zoning Board of Appeals for variances as specified by the approved Preliminary Site Plan and Special Land Use Request by the City of Novi Planning Commission on October 22, 2008, pertaining to the above mentioned proposed Sri Venkateswara Temple and Cultural Center project.

This project will bring forward a Hindu Temple and Cultural Center to the community of Novi. This is an opportunity of expanding horizons of cultural enhancement and providing economic opportunity to the greater community as a point of destination. The Temple is designed based upon authentic design features of the Temples in India of which it is based. A Hindu Temple is designed upon the principles of Vastu, a practice similar in nature to Feng Shui, essentially, it is the blending and harmonizing of the built environment with the land that it sets upon and the people who inhabit it. This understanding is all translated through the practice of Vastu and is determinate of the composure of the overall project and how the elements within the project are put together.

This proposed development utilized the assistance of a Vastu specialist from India. This specialist deals specifically with the design of temples. The evolution of the proposed Temple has led us to seek certain variances related to height, most of which are akin in circumstance to that of a spire on a church, and we are seeking a variance for parking. The variances and waivers sought are germane to the successful implementation of the project as presented to the Planning Commission. We have designed the project to keep within the proper zoning codes and ordinances of the City of Novi while working hard to preserve as much as possible the integrity of the natural resources of the site. The following variance requests are being sought as we could not find a suitable alternative to successfully accommodate the following situations:



Variances Sought:

**HEIGHT VARIANCES – DECORATIVE ORNAMENTS –  
RELEVANT ORDINANCE SECTIONS 2400 & 2903**

- 1) **Proposed Maha Rajagopuram in front of the building entrance is 37' - 4.5" in height, maximum building height allowed is 35'. A variance for 2' - 4.5" is requested.**
- 2) **A decorative element at the front of the building is 36.5' in height, maximum building height allowed is 35'. A variance for 1'-5" is requested.**
- 3) **A decorative element at the front of the building is 40.5' in height, maximum building height allowed is 35'. A variance for 5'-5" is requested.**
- 4) **A decorative ornament near the rear of the building is 50' in height, maximum building height allowed is 35'. A variance for 15' is requested.**
- 5) **A decorative ornament near the rear of the building is 50' in height, maximum building height allowed is 35'. A variance for 15' is requested.**
- 6) **A brass pole in the courtyard is 55'-1" in height, maximum building height allowed is 35'. A variance for 20'-1" is requested.**
- 7) **The decorative tower element at the rear of the building is 55'-1" in height, maximum building height allowed is 35'. A variance for 20'-1" is requested.**

These height variances requested for the Temple structure pertain to purely decorative elements and are symbolic of the religious elements that comprise the overall Temple structure. They are similar in nature to that of a church spire. These elements are derived from straight proportional implications and are meant to project beyond the general building height of the main temple structure.

The Maha Rajgopuram in the front is essentially the entrance gateway to the building. It is meant to be tall to announce the entrance to the compound. It has a distinct pyramid type shape that tapers toward the top. The bottom of the structure is wide and larger in proportion and the top is smaller and shorter in its banding.



The decorative elements at the front of the building are those that mark the entry point and are purely decorative.

The decorative elements/ornaments as well as the tower at the rear of the building mark actual positions of sacred spaces within the building and are also purely decorative.

The brass pole is a symbolic entry point that one passes prior to entering the prayer hall space. The height of this pole specifically matches the height of the tower at the rear of the building. It is positioned on center with the center of the corresponding sacred space inside the prayer hall. It is equivalent in its use to a flag pole structure.

Section 2903 of the Zoning Ordinance allows these elements to not apply to the height limitations and states that the height of any such structure shall not be greater than the distance to the nearest property line. These elements are all on the Temple building itself, the Temple building sits well inside of the building setbacks on each boundary. The building setback from each of the North and South property lines (closest) is 75' from each line. The highest structure contemplated above is 55'-1" in height. Therefore, we ask for an interpretation of these elements as discussed and as they may apply in Section 2903 and allow these important features to be present as the temple building could not be properly completed without them.

#### **HEIGHT VARIANCES – ROOF TOP APPURTENANCES**

RELEVANT ORDINANCE SECTION 2503.2e.(2)

- 8) Proposed Roof-Top Appurtenance on Temple Building is 42' in height, the maximum building height allowed is 35'. A variance for 7' is requested.**

In order to better comply with the Noise Ordinance requirements, a proper full walled enclosure was created around the proposed mechanical equipment – a mechanical penthouse. For the Temple building, this penthouse will exceed the height limitation as it is essentially a third floor. This building has no basement, the first floor starts at ground level. Effort has been made to lower the interior ceiling height of the prayer hall where this mechanical penthouse would be positioned above so as to lower the overall height of the exterior wall of this penthouse; however, with the need to create a space for people to properly enter this area for servicing of equipment and with proper provision for ventilation of such equipment, the 42' height mark was not able to be avoided and therefore a variance for this height is kindly requested in order to properly reduce sound of mechanical equipment from the neighboring properties.



**LOCATION OF REFUSE BIN VARIANCE –**  
RELEVANT ORDINANCE SECTION 2503.2.F.1

**9) A refuse bin for the Cultural Center building is proposed to be located in the side yard to have proximity to this building.**

We are in agreement with the findings of the Department of Community Development and are currently working with the Department to reposition the dumpster/refuse bin behind the building as opposed to the side yard; therefore we no longer request a variance for this location of the refuse bin.

**PARKING VARIANCE –**  
RELEVANT ORDINANCE SECTION 2503.2.F.1

**10) Proposed Parking Capacity is 272 spaces, the minimum number of spaces required for Churches or Temples is one space for each three seats or persons permitted to capacity. A variance is requested for 34 parking spaces, per the Planning Commission evaluation on October 22, 2008 and per a corresponding explanation from the Deputy Director of Community Development for the City of Novi, Barbara McBeth.**

Maximum capacity use of the Temple building will not occur simultaneously with the maximum capacity use of the Cultural Center building. A letter reiterating this fact shall also accompany this submission for consideration. This was a condition of approval for the Special Land Use and Preliminary Site Plan by the Planning Commission on October 22, 2008.

The capacity for parking has been determined by the maximum use of the main use structure, the Temple. There are two main rooms of significant area: the Prayer Hall and the Multi-Purpose Room. Based upon the capacities of these rooms, the Prayer Hall would require 194 parking spaces and the Multi-Purpose Room would require 112 parking spaces for a total of 306 parking spaces. A total of 272 parking spaces are proposed, therefore a variance is requested for 34 parking spaces.

The achievement for maximum capacity for any one building would be a highly rare situation and is at current inconceivable due to the program of how these specialized buildings are used. The achievement for maximum capacity simultaneously for the two main publicly accessed buildings, the Temple and Cultural Center is out of the question and this notion is backed by an accompanying letter from the Temple organization stating this fact. There are a few specific opportunities for celebrations of religious events or occasions in which the Temple can expect a large gathering of people, however, even during these events, in order to participate and/or witness the occasion one



must occupy the Prayer Hall space. No other room will serve an accommodating purpose equivalent to what is happening in the Prayer Hall. Therefore it is not expected to achieve maximum capacity in the Prayer Hall and Multi-Purpose Room simultaneously.

In order to provide all possible opportunities for those unforeseeable circumstances, contingency plans have been provided to help ensure that parking does not become a problem for this project and the neighboring properties:

1.) OVERFLOW PARKING AGREEMENTS. A letter of agreement has been provided by a commercial neighboring property to allow the Temple organization the use of its parking facility to accommodate any overflow-type parking should it be necessary. This commercial neighboring property is Miracle Software located on Grand River Avenue in very close proximity to this property. Miracle Software's hours of operation will not clash with the hours of operation in which such an overflow occasion would be necessary. The Priest Residence component of this project accommodates a three-car garage space in which the Temple organization can house its own shuttle/transportation to ensure smooth operation of this situation. Similar agreements are also being contemplated with other entities within the community to allow maximum flexibility for any possible unforeseen condition.

2.) NO PARKING SIGNAGE ALONG TAFT ROAD. The Temple organization has voluntarily offered to place, in coordination with the relevant departments of the City of Novi, 'No Parking' signage along this section of Taft Road to ensure that overflow parking situations would not be allowed along Taft Road so as to not disrupt the neighborhood community.

We thank you for this opportunity to identify and petition for these variances we are requesting for the implementation of the Sri Venkateswara Temple and Cultural Center project. We have made great effort to keep the bulk of this ambitious project within the parameters of the relevant zoning codes and ordinances, your approval of these reasonably requested items will allow us the opportunity to accomplish the needs of this project for a successful integration within the community of Novi.

Sincerely,  
**MANYAM GROUP**

Praveen Manyam

## INTRODUCTION

### About the Project

The Sri Venkateswara Temple and Cultural Center is a proposal and opportunity for the cultural enrichment and dialog of the Indian-American Community within the Novi landscape. It is an opportunity to open doors of the Hindu religion as well as music, dance and culture of Southern India to those who come to Novi. This temple concept itself is rooted in centuries-old tradition and architecture of the Southern region of India. It is inspired from the world famous Tirupathi temple in the state of Andhra Pradesh, India. Throughout the United States, Sri Venkateswara inspired temples have been organized in major metropolitan areas. In the Southeastern Michigan region, Hindu temples are in existence and some of them are undergoing major expansion and/or new construction, the temple being proposed as part of the Novi landscape, brings across specifically some of the rich traditions of the Sri Venkateswara-inspired temples and cultures of the Southern regions in India to the people of the greater Detroit area community and beyond.

## BUILDING TYPE AND PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

### Architectural Styling

The architecture styling detailed for these buildings are rooted with traditional strokes from that of authentic buildings of South India. The style of Architecture used for the design of the Temple and Cultural Center is stemmed from the Vijayanagar architectural style, dating back to the 1300s to the 1600s in influence. Characteristics of this style of architecture include ornate pillars and decorative banding as well as stepped or rhythmic exterior walls. This architectural style is a conglomeration of many different styles of architecture of that period and is generally representative of the styles inspired by Sri Venkateswara temples of the area.

The design principles in developing a Hindu Temple stem from an ancient science referred to as Vastu. The practice of Vastu is essentially the development of guiding principles of organization and harmony of the environment with its occupants. Feng Shui is a science that has developed out of Vastu principles. Some of the Vastu principles determine decisions such as how one enters the temple and where on the land the temple should be located, as well as heights and ratios amongst other criteria. Creating an opportunity for proper Vastu ideas is an important step in Hindu practices and helps for a successful temple community.

The functionality of the Hindu Temple flows more with the flexibility of the Hindu religious practice itself. The prayer hall space is an open floor space without fixed seating. There are no fixed opportunities in which the entire congregation would come at one time for services. There are services with posted hours, however, none that attract large crowds of any nature outside of a few auspicious occasions that would occur during the course of a year and devotees would make a more concentrated effort to try and come to this service around that time. On a weekly level, or even daily level, there are no specific opportunities to invite an entire congregation of people for a specific service. People generally would visit the Temple based upon their schedules and events and the Temple generally tries to hold convenient hours to receive them as is possible.

### **Planning / Phasing**

The planning of the development of this project is to have three critical components: the temple, a residence for the temple's priests and a cultural center for music, arts, dance, learning and camaraderie. In order to maximize functionality and project scale, these three components have been planned as separate facilities – yet all serving the same overall programmatic function.

The proposed project is planned to be developed in three (3) phases. The phases are designed to provide temple services and support to the community on a gradual scale until the full scope of the development is able to be realized.

Phase One will focus on a housing facility for temple priests specially trained for such duties along with a temporary temple facility to serve as the temple until the actual temple is built. The temporary temple included in the housing facility will become a meditation room space for the residing priests after the proper temple is operational. Also to be accomplished within Phase One will be the primary site work necessary for access and parking within the site for such a facility as possible.

Phase Two of this project will consist of the primary focus of this development, the Temple building. It is planned to begin either immediately or shortly thereafter the completion of Phase One. In keeping with its authenticity of design, special skilled assistance will be required in the completion of this design. Programmatically this building will consist of a temple/prayer hall space as well as a kitchen to serve food offerings to devotees. It is a very important tradition to provide food to those who come to the temple. Therefore, a multi-purpose area has been designed to accommodate those who wish to eat and help keep the other areas of the Temple building cleaner. This Multi-Purpose Area space will more than likely serve as a limited general activity area for the temple as the upstairs Prayer Hall space is designed to be a more pensive space of the Temple.

Phase Three will be the completion of the Cultural Center and will put a face and presence along Taft Rd. for the development. The Cultural Center will contain a multi-purpose hall for special events. There will be classrooms for the opportunity to teach and learn music and dance, language, religion and culture as well as a library for learning and studying.

Parking on the campus will be shared by all buildings. The Priest Residence is private in its functionality and parking/traffic demands are not expected for this building at any high level, at any time. The Cultural Center building serves officially in its capacity as a unit of the Temple. Events at the Cultural Center are never held concurrently with any large-scaled Temple activities. Any Temple-related auspicious occasions that would draw a large amount of people, would focus all traffic and resources for such a particular occasion to the Temple itself. Classes and/or events of any nature would not be held during such an occasion due to disruption of the services at the Temple and out of respect to the auspicious occasion that is being celebrated. Therefore, if maximum capacity for the respective spaces is ever achieved for either the Prayer Hall area at the Temple or the hall area at the Cultural Center, then such an occasion would occur independent of the other building and not for both buildings at the same time.



**PROJECT PROPOSED AREA AND CAPACITIES:**

**Proposed Building Details:**

Building Area Estimates:

Phase I – Priest Residence w/Temporary Temple Facility

Living Area:	3,393 s.f.
Garage Area:	900 s.f.
Meditation Area	
/ Temporary Temple Space:	900 s.f.
Basement Area (unfinished):	1,500 s.f.
TOTAL ESTIMATED BUILDING AREA:	6,693 s.f.

Phase II – Temple

TOTAL ESTIMATED BUILDING AREA:	22,693 s.f.
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Phase III – Cultural Center

TOTAL ESTIMATED BUILDING AREA:	21,823 s.f.
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TOTAL BUILDING AREA:	51,209 s.f.
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**Proposed Parking Information:**

Total Parking Capacity = 272 spaces, (14 H.C. Spaces)

Phase 1 = 88 spaces

Phase 2 = 169 spaces

Phase 3 = 15 spaces

**Proposed Occupancy Information (Full Capacity Estimation):**

Main Areas:

Temple – Prayer Hall Area: 560 Persons (no seating)

Cultural Center – Hall Area: 432 Persons (banquet-hall style setting)

## OCCUPANCY USE DESCRIPTION

The Sri Venkateswara Temple and Cultural Center project provides an opportunity of religious and cultural splendor of the Southern Regions of India to the Metropolitan Detroit area, within the City of Novi. This is a religious and cultural background for so many professionals who live and work in this area. The project is proposed to be developed in three phases – a residence for priests who maintain the temple, the temple and a cultural center to support activities to the community.

### Phase I – Priest Residence

The priest residence is planned as housing for the temple priests. Initially, until the temple is completed, it will serve as the temporary temple. A large meditation room has been planned to accommodate this temporary situation.

After completion of the temple, this building is intended for private access and use by temple staff and management and be the residential quarters for the priests who will support the temple.

### Phase II – Sri Venkateswara Temple

The Sri Venkateswara Temple is a temple of the Hindu religion and its proposed construction here is planned with as much authenticity as is possible within our local environment, stemming from its architectural shapes and detail to the services being offered inside.

The temple will have an operating hours schedule, generally it will be open:

Weekdays: 9am to 12pm and 5pm to 9pm

Weekends: 9am to 10pm

There are formal prayers that may occur during the day; however there are no formal services that would necessarily draw a crowd of any sort during a normal weekday or weekend. There is no fixed seating in the prayer hall area. On a normal weekday we may anticipate having about 50-80 devotees during the course of the day at various times (not all at one time) and about 150 people during the course of a weekend day at various times through the day. On Special Occasions we could see an increase of double the amount of people. Special Occasions would generally be marked by auspicious events to be celebrated by the temple and the number of such anticipated occasions can essentially be counted on the fingers of your hands for the course of a year.

#### Typical Weekday Services/Activities:

A day is usually started with formal morning prayers (Subrapatham) led by the priest at 9am and end at 10am. Individuals usually come and go at their convenience. They will pray by themselves or they may use the priest to offer prayers. The temples of this nature usually close down by lunch time and the afternoon is generally reserved for having lunch and taking naps and such. The temple would then open again at 5pm to coordinate with work schedules and accommodate devotees to come and go at their convenience until around 9pm at which time there is a formal evening prayer led by the priest (Sayanotsavam).

#### Typical Weekend Services/Activities:

A weekend is usually the same program as a weekday, however the temple would be open in the afternoon as well. A mid-day prayer (Abishakam) would start at 11am and conclude by 1pm. Again devotees are always welcome to come and go as they wish anytime the temple is open.

#### Seasonal and Special Occasions:

During the course of the year, there are special seasonal prayers and functions that would occur, approximately 6 to 8 occasions, such as Telugu New Year's Day and the Lunar and Solar eclipses. These functions are more auspicious in nature and would generally attract more people. Additional prayer services may be scheduled to celebrate these few events, which is when we expect our greatest concentration of people at any one time.

There are usually no formal services that start at particular times during a normal weekday or weekend that would necessarily draw a crowd of any sort. There are no fixed seats for formal services. Most patrons come and go at their own pace.

#### Services:

The temple will be supported by offices and a multi-purpose hall with a kitchen and an area for a removable stage. Until the Cultural Center is built, the need to accommodate these activities such as music and dance class, library, language and writing activities will be accommodated in the first floor of the building. It is customary in the Indian culture to remove one's shoes upon entering a building, and with the temple itself being a more sacred environment, areas for coats and shoes have been planned for, in wide open spaces to allow for free movement and flow throughout the building.

### **Phase III – Cultural Center**

The final phase of our proposed development is a Cultural Center. This building is planned as a support building to the temple and would eventually separate various activities out of the temple itself to allow the focus of the temple to be a preferred place of worship.

The Cultural Center would be a place with classrooms, offices, a multi-purpose hall and a library for study. Some activities that can take place are teachings of the Hindu religion, dance and music classes for the youth, language and writing classes, and various events to take place within a partition friendly re-configurable space.

The multi-purpose hall would be a space available to devotees to celebrate and hold religious functions such as Hindu weddings, birthdays, graduations, memorial functions to forefathers/mothers and such traditional Hindu ceremonies.

All activities are indoor only activities and there will be no provisions for outdoor loudspeakers.

Operational hours for the Cultural Center are still under discussion, they are planned to be developed in accordance with availability and access for the various uses of the building. The building will be open during the weekday to allow the general public access to the library and classrooms should there be an interest in organizing a class of cultural significance. The building will be open on weekends to provide support to the community by way of classes of dance, music and language.

#### **Summary**

The three buildings, once complete will serve separate but related purposes and will not be setup as independent units. The Temple will remain the focus building and will keep its hours accordingly. The Priest Residence is purely a support building to the Temple itself and is not to serve general public interests. The Cultural Center will have specific activities in line with the Sri Venkateswara Temple and Cultural Center, Inc. organizational setup and will not compete with the Temple for parking spaces for any planned events. All buildings will be open and available to all members of the community in support of values of enrichment, understanding and heritage established in the development of this project.